

# Regional Pursuits

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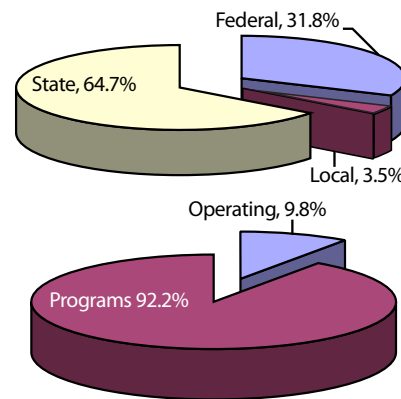


## Membership Approves Work Program and Budget for FY 2011

The Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC) membership has approved the 2011 Work Program and Budget that will allow the Council to continue its active role in the Region. The new FY 2011 budget puts emphasis on, and addresses needs within Cameron, Hidalgo and Willacy Counties in programs such as Transit, Criminal Justice Assistance, Homeland Security, Law Enforcement Training, 9-1-1 Coordination, Solid Waste, Water Quality/Quantity Planning, Economic Development, the Area Agency on Aging, and Disaster Recovery Funding as a result of Hurricane Dolly.

are used successfully to leverage state and federal funds. Only 1% of the LRGVDC budget is generated from membership dues.”

### LRGVDC 2011 BUDGET



***The LRGVDC employs 123 individuals and will operate on an annual budget of \$19.9 million in 2011.***

“The budget reflects a sound organization and continued regional support of comprehensive services provided,” stated Mayor Chris Boswell, LRGVDC president. “Local revenues

State income sources include the Texas Department of Rural Affairs, Texas Water Development Board, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Criminal Justice Division of the Governor’s Office, Texas Department of Transportation, TDPS/ State Homeland Security, and the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services. Federal sources for funds include the Economic Development Administration, the Corporation for National Service and the Federal Transit Administration.

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LRGVDC Staff Receives Recognition for Years of Service

9-1-1 Public Education Program

FREE FLETC Course: Investigating Crimes against the Elderly

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Valley Metro Introduces New Bus Passes

Valley Metro Introduces Downtown Ticket for Harlingen Riders

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*REGIONAL PURSUITS is available without cost and inquiries should be directed to:*

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# LRGVDC Recognize Eight Years of Service



Mayor Chris Boswell, LRGVDC Board President (right) presents Hidalgo County Commissioner Joel Quintanilla (left) with a plaque recognizing the eight years he served on the LRGVDC Board of Directors representing the City of Merced during his term as mayor.

# LRGVDC Staff Receives Recognition for Years of Service



Front row l-r: Amalia Segovia, 5 yrs; Maria L. Rojas, 5 Yrs; Sylvia Yanes, 10 yrs; Mayor Chris Boswell, Board President; Crystal Balboa, 15 yrs; James Salazar, 5 yrs; Miguel Moncada, 5 yrs. Back row l-r: Jose L. Gonzalez, 30 yrs; Juan J. Gomez, 10 yrs; Sergio Castro, 5 yrs; Stephen Tice, 5 yrs; Linda de la Fuente, 5 yrs.  
Not pictured: Francisco Martinez, 5 yrs; Julio Perez 5 yrs; Magdalena Garza, 15 yrs.

# 9-1-1 Public Education Program



Hector Chapa, LRGVDC 9-1-1 Technician III, shows a student from Monte Alto Elementary how to dial 9-1-1 from a cell phone.



Cell Phone Sally poses for a picture with students from Monte Alto Elementary

# Investigating Crimes against the Elderly Course

On December 15th and 16th, 2010, ten law enforcement officers from different areas of the Lower Rio Grande Valley attended the first session of “Investigating Crimes against the Elderly”. The course was conducted at San Benito Sheriff’s Department and participants received 16 TCLEOSE hours and a Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition from Congressman Ruben Hinojosa. This course is FLETC-approved (Federal Law Enforcement Training Center), and conducted by FLETC-Certified Adjunct Trainer on Elder Abuse, Jennifer Catalani, along with TCLEOSE-certified co-trainer, William McGinnis.

Jennifer Catalani is a Resource and External Relations Specialist for Texas Department of Family & Protective Services: Adult Protective Services (APS). William McGinnis is a Police Academy Instructor with the Lower Rio Grande Development Council and has law enforcement background with Donna Police Department as a Criminal Investigator.

During the course, participants learn State statutes as they apply to investigating elder abuse and signs of abuse, neglect and financial exploitation of elderly and disabled adults. Interview considerations to take into account while investigating elder abuse cases were also addressed. Participants also learned about Adult Protective Services policies and procedures, which helped them understand how APS and law enforcement agencies can work together while investigating such cases, and improve those partnerships.

During the December course participants attended from the San Benito Police Department, Cameron County Pct. 4 Constables Office, the La Feria Police Department, and the Hidalgo County Pct. 1 Constable’s Office.



*(Participants from the December 2010 Investigating Crimes against the Elderly Course)*

The Elder Abuse Awareness Training for Law Enforcement course held in conjunction with the Texas Department of Family Protective Services, specifically the Adult Protective Services division, February 24 - 25, 2011 was a successful undertaking. The two day, 16 hour training course, was designed by the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) in order to increase the awareness of Elder Abuse to law enforcement officials, along with methods to approach, identify, and investigate these types of incidents involving abuse of the elderly. The training also encouraged cooperation between agencies in order to combat the crimes of elder abuse, by improving communication between law enforcement and social services. The course also demonstrated the different types of abuse that are common amongst the elderly. These areas included: financial exploitation, physical abuse, psychological abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect.

This particular training was hosted at the Pecan Campus of the South Texas College in McAllen, Texas. Seventeen (17) participants attended, including officials from the Hidalgo County Pct. 1 Constable’s Office, the San Benito Police Department, the Pharr Police Department, the Edinburg Police Department, and the Hidalgo County Probate Court. Upon the completion of the course numerous participants expressed their gratitude for the training and stated that it was beneficial and thorough. Mr. Salomon Torres, from U.S. Congressman Ruben Hinojosa’s office, presented the participants with certificates of recognition and spoke about the topic of elder abuse, citing recent events involving elder abuse.



*(Participants from the February 2011 Investigating Crimes against the Elderly Course)*

The course did well over all; Jennifer Catalani from Adult Protective Services did a great job presenting this course and expressed commitment to conduct more courses in the future in our region.

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Development Council**



# REGIONAL ECONOMIC ADJUSTMENT PLAN (EAP) For Building Disaster Resilient Communities

During the week of January 10, 2011, the LRGVDC, EDA Grantee, and S&B Infrastructure, Ltd., the Project Contractor for the Regional Economic Adjustment Plan (Plan), and the Consultant Team, conducted the first round of public meetings in each of the four participating counties (Starr, Hidalgo, Cameron and Willacy). The purpose of these meetings was to invite the general public so they could learn about the project, ask questions, and provide local input.

The goal of this Plan is to help ensure economic growth and recovery following a natural disaster by identifying critical infrastructure projects needed to address severe flooding and drainage problems in the Valley, plus allow communities to plan for future land use projects. This effort will also include developing criteria for evaluation of capital improvements projects region-wide.



*January 10, 2011, Starr County meeting held at the Starr County Industrial Foundation in Rio Grande City*

The first meeting was held in Rio Grande City. The group discussed a range of issues including: the need to include all of Starr County in the study, impacts of flood waters from Mexico, and the need to review local building codes in regards to building foundation heights.



*January 11, 2011, Hidalgo County meeting held at the McAllen Chamber of Commerce in McAllen*

A number of advocates for Colonias spoke at the Hidalgo County meeting. They encouraged inclusion of Colonia residents in the process and to visit some Colonias impacted by flooding. Participants also asked questions about the funding of projects. Project team members responded by letting the group know that funding could come from a variety of sources

including federal, state, and local, however details are not yet determined. It was also stated that this Plan was to be used as a tool to support funding for these regional projects.

At the Cameron County meeting in San Benito, Commissioner David Garza, came to address the citizens and offered his support. Commissioner Garza is also Vice-Chair of the Project Steering Committee. Local residents from a neighborhood and other attendees discussed the need to provide drainage services to areas and neighborhoods outside the jurisdiction of cities or special districts.



*January 12, 2011, Cameron County meeting held at the Cameron County-San Benito Annex in San Benito*

The final meeting was held in Raymondville. A big thank you goes out to the citizens of Willacy County who came out that very cold night, especially Willacy County Commissioner Fred Serrato and Eleazar (Yogi) Garcia, City Manager for Raymondville. Project identification summaries and evaluation criterion for ranking and prioritizing projects was discussed at this meeting as well as at other county meetings. Currently the project team and committees are working on a process that objectively prioritizes projects keeping in mind the cost/benefit of identified projects.



*January 13, 2011, Willacy County meeting held at the L.E. Franks Tourist Center in Raymondville*

Public participation and input is still being requested. For detailed project information, and to fill out an on-line survey, go to [www.lrgv-regional-eap.com](http://www.lrgv-regional-eap.com). The next round of public meetings will be held during the month of April, 2011. Please feel free to call with any questions or comments regarding this Project; for LRGVDC Economic Development Department Staff call 956-682-3481 or Project Team Members, Leah Olivarri at 1-800-945-2156, Ext 21 and Elvia Aguilar at 1-800-945-2156 Ext 26 for Spanish speakers.

# Valley Metro Introduces New Bus Passes

With a system-wide rebranding in the works, Valley Metro's staff revisited its bus pass system in late 2010. Staff studied the ticket/pass structure and worked to come up with a more customer-friendly system. In early 2011 Valley Metro introduced its new tickets and passes. Minimizing the number of different options available from nineteen (19) to three (3), the new system is much more convenient and user-friendly. The new passes include the Single Ride Ticket, good for one ride on any Valley Metro bus, the Transfer Ticket, which must be requested by the passenger upon boarding and is good for a free transfer to another bus, and the 20-Ride Pass, which is good for 20 rides on any Valley Metro route.

Tickets can be purchased from the LRGVDC Finance Department, the McAllen Central Station, the VTC Station in Harlingen, and the TSTC Bookstore. The Single Ride Ticket will cost the passenger \$1.50 if he/she is an adult or \$.75 if he/she is a veteran, elderly person (age 60+), person with disability, or a student. The Transfer Ticket is free of charge, but must be requested upon boarding the bus. Finally, the 20-Ride Pass will cost \$20.00 for a regular rider or \$10.00 for veterans, the elderly, persons with disabilities, or students.

Valley Metro staff is excited to introduce the new standardized bus passes.



## Valley Metro Introduces Downtown Ticket for Harlingen Riders

In a move to promote businesses in downtown Harlingen and increase mobility for Winter Texans, the City of Harlingen Downtown District and LRGVDC's Valley Metro have introduced a promotional downtown bus ticket. The ticket, purchased by the City of Harlingen Downtown District and distributed to RV Parks and downtown businesses for free distribution to potential passengers, is good for a single one-way trip originating or ending in the downtown Harlingen area bordered by Madison Street, Harrison Street, 4th Street, and the railroad track adjacent to Commerce Street. Passengers pay nothing for the ticket and they get to experience the transit system and visit downtown merchants with the pass.

"This is a great program that we hope to expand to other cities," says LRGVDC Valley Metro Program Administrator

Rodney Gomez. "Any time a city wants to promote its local businesses, it's a good thing. I can see a future where shopper shuttles, subsidized by local businesses and local municipalities, encourage consumers to visit a wide variety of businesses, encouraging growth. Why? Because public transit improves mobility and supplies access to businesses."



A photo of the downtown Harlingen bus ticket.